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Altogether, this new edition is one upon which Professor Holthausen may be cordially congratulated. It should appeal to a wide circle of students in various countries. A new and revised edition will certainly be welcome in a short time,—an edition representing not only the correction of certain errors and inconsistencies sure to creep into a first draft, but also embodying the results of some of the many friendly criticisms which such a book as this is sure to call forth. The difficulties and the labor which attend the preparation of an edition of *Bēowulf* are probably not fully realized by most readers. Surely, hearty encouragement should attend so creditable a performance of the task.

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Beowulf nebst dem Finnsburg-Bruchstück, übersetzt und erläutert von Hugo Gering. Heidelberg, 1906.

This little book forms a fitting companion-piece to Holthausen's edition of *Bēowulf*, reviewed above. The translator has based his work upon the Holthausen text, allowing himself liberties here and there, but without entering into discussions of variant readings, so unimportant and uninteresting to the general reader. While not primarily intended for the use of scholars, the book is one which they may be glad to add to their libraries. The name of Professor Gering is a sufficient assurance of the general excellence of the work. Students of early Germanic poetry are already indebted to him for a translation of the Poetic Edda into German verse, with a convenient introduction and useful notes. In the present volume, his familiarity with the Northern material which has so close a connection with *Bēowulf* appears in the admirable annotations, some of which may be new even to those who are fairly well acquainted with Anglo-Saxon literature. These notes, with a brief introduction, give the general reader all that is necessary for an intelligent comprehension of the main facts in regard to the poem.

The experiments which have been made in rendering *Bēowulf*

into modern English have left many critics, perhaps most, with the conviction that prose is better than verse as a medium for the translator. The opportunity which it affords for a more literal reproduction of the original, and the difficulty of suggesting the movement of the Anglo-Saxon, or perhaps rather the danger of giving a false impression of it by the use of modern verse are strong arguments in support of this view. At the same time, *Bēowulf* is a poem, and it is perhaps better for those who can gain only a superficial knowledge of it to feel its poetic quality by reading it in verse, however different this may be. Most of the standard German translations are metrical. Professor Gering has no doubt done wisely in not departing from this precedent, especially since his readers are to be those who desire the story and a suggestion of the spirit of the original, rather than a literal rendering of the text.

An illustrative passage will give a better idea of the translation than any description.

- Nur einige Meilen
Entfernt von hier ist der furchtbare Sumpf;
Darüber hangen bereifte Haine,
Die wurzelgefestet das Wasser beschatten.
1365. Dort sieht man allnächtlich ein seltsames Wunder,
In der Flut ein Feuer; erforscht hat nie
Ein Menschenkind dieses Moores Tiefe.
Selbst der hornbewehrte Heidebewohner,
Der Hirsch, der gehetzt vor den Hunden sich flüchtet
1370. Ins belaubte Gehölz, gibt sein Leben eher
Dahin am Gestad', eh' sein Haupt er berge
Im See, denn dort ist's selten geheuer.
In Wirbeln steigt zu den Wolken oft
Das Wasser empor, wenn der Wind herantreibt
1375. Die leid'gen Gewitter, die Luft sich verdunkelt
Und der Himmel weint.

Perhaps a foreigner is not justified in attempting to decide how successful the present rendering is when judged from the point of view of German verse. Whether or not it brings out anything of the peculiar coloring of the original, it is on the

whole a fairly close translation, and it keeps a constant suggestion of the alliteration. In such a sentence as

Nō þæs frōð leofað
gumena bearna, þæt þone grund wite,

which obviously must be paraphrased, the translator has shown considerable ingenuity in dealing with the Anglo-Saxon idiom. The language is generally clear and simple,—a quality which appears somewhat more plainly in other passages than the piece of description just quoted. Upon various matters of detail one might take issue with the translator, but such differences of opinion would deal with expressions in regard to which a legitimate difference of opinion may exist. The limitations of a metrical version must, of course, never be forgotten.

The introduction gives a short résumé of the familiar facts about the poem, written from the point of view of a scholar thoroughly familiar with the present state of critical theory. Professor Gering recognizes the purely imaginary (*sagen - oder märchenhaft*) basis of the poem, but rejects as unproved Müllenhoff's hypothesis that the two principal adventures represent at bottom the exploits of a divine hero Beowa, identical with Freyr. Of mythology he has nothing further to say, but much of historical events. He is careful to point out that the epic is inconsistent in its representation of political and historical conditions, but he ventures to offer an ingenious table of events, with hypothetical dates, from the birth of Hrethel (430?) to the death of Beowulf (571?), the only ascertainable date being naturally the year of Hygelac's death. He comes stiffly out for the Fahlbeck-Bugge hypothesis of the location of the Geats in Jutland, in which he will find a good many scholars disagreeing with him. In a book of this kind so disputed a matter should perhaps have been presented more diplomatically. It might be well for the average reader to be told that the people who heard the poem in its present shape in England very likely had no clear idea of its geography, and that possibly the man who put it into final form was not clear in his mind as to the relative location of the different tribes. Professor Gering rightly rejects the old "*liedertheorie*" arguments, and recognizes the piece as substantially the work of a single author. A cleric it was, he thinks, a man who

"placed a Germanic heroic epic beside Biblical epics already written." The probable Scandinavian origin of the story might have been made a little plainer, lest the casual reader get a wrong idea of the provenience of the "Anglo-Saxon" epic. The important parallels in Saxo, the sagas, and Scandinavian literature generally, and their meaning for questions of origin might well have been briefly noticed here. The mention of them later in the notes hardly serves the same purpose.

The notes themselves, as has already been suggested, are admirable. Such difficult passages as the Finnsburg Episode and Fragment, or the Thrytho Episode, are interpreted clearly, and with due regard to the critical evidence. The explanation of the Thrytho passage is more convincing than Holthausen's. The latter makes the ferocious lady's name a compound,—*möðþrýð*, "hochmut." These notes are full of suggestive parallels from Old Norse, which will often set the intelligent student to a fresh reading of that literature, as where the grief of the father who sees his son riding upon the gallows (2444) is compared to the situation in the Eormanric story upon the tragic death of Randver. The mention of even very obvious resemblances cannot be said to be out of place in a translation intended for a general audience.

It is gratifying to see a book like this, intended for popular use, conceived and executed in a thoroughly scholarly way. It forms in this respect a sharp contrast to another translation of *Beowulf*, published in Germany a year earlier.¹ In that volume the poem is sliced up and served in sections, the separation of supposedly spurious portions from the older and genuine passages being, according to the principles followed by the author, necessary to an enjoyment of the poetic qualities of the epic. In short, the "liedertheorie" still flourishing like the green bay tree, undisturbed by the assaults of criticism. The merits of Professor Gering's work appear in a still stronger light when compared with a translation and explanatory material not based on modern research. Renderings of the sort just mentioned should be discouraged. They tend to give a false idea of the poem as it stands, and encumber the reader with information

¹P. Vogt, *Beowulf*, *Altenglisches Heldengedicht*, Halle, 1905.

which is not only superfluous but misleading. On the other hand, no apology is necessary for adding another to the list of translations of *Bēowulf*, when it preserves the general high standard of the present volume. With its sane and scholarly illustrative comment, its adequate reproduction of the original, and its attractive and inexpensive form, it should rank with the best modern renderings, not only in German, but in English as well.

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The Moral System of Shakespeare, a Popular Illustration of Fiction as the Experimental Side of Philosophy. By Richard G. Moulton. New York, the Macmillan Company, 1903. 800, pp. viii, 381.

‘Another volume of Shakespeare criticism!’ says the weary student, as he reads the title of Professor Moulton’s book, ‘Is there anything new in it?’ At least, he will find no rehashing of the meagre details of Shakespeare’s life, no discussion of dates, or authorship, or sources, no new attempt to wring from this drama or that any evidence as to Shakespeare’s psychical states. ‘Indeed, this book does not concern itself in any way with the man Shakespeare! if any of my readers inclines to the view that the plays of Shakespeare were written by Lord Bacon, or, for that matter, by Queen Elizabeth, he will find nothing in the pages that follow to disturb his faith. “Shakespeare” is only used as a convenient name for the whole body of thirty-six dramas usually attributed to William Shakespeare, by whomsoever these dramas may have been composed, in whatsoever way they may have been put together.’

If this new volume of criticism is not personal nor historical, neither is it of the showman-critic type. Shakespeare is not put through his paces with admiring ejaculations of ‘How beautiful! How sublime!’ The book is as purely objective as the plays themselves. Surely this is a virtue.

Professor Moulton calls his study ‘The Moral System of Shakespeare,’ and the prospective reader will wish to know what